

CHINESE SHADOWS

by

Juliet Bredon.

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To Josephine Pond

with love from your  
father Pauline Laura.

Juliet Erdman

Peoria  
March 1951



CHINESE SHADOWS

by

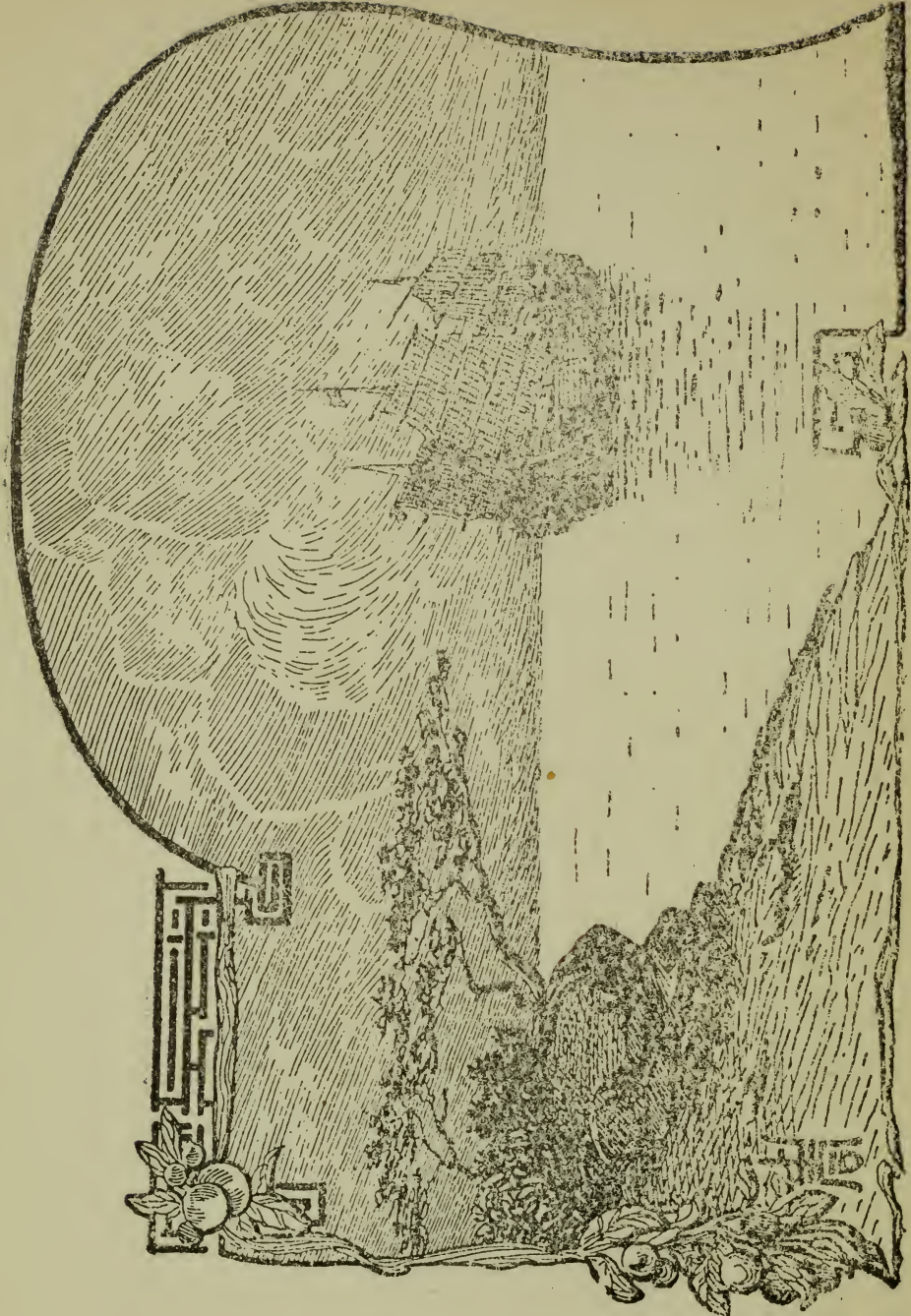
Juliet Bredon.

Printed by  
the Pei Kuan Press  
„Vostochnoe Prosveschenie Co”  
Pei Kuan, Peking.

1922



Child songs.



The Dream Junk.



## The Dream Junk.

(A Chinese Lullaby).

Sleep, my almond blossom, sleep,  
The Lord of Heaven sends His command  
That all the world shall close its eyes  
And lie at peace beneath His hand.

Sleep, my treasure, sleep, nor fear  
The Dragon who pursues the Sun,  
For he must swallow up the light  
Before the shadows can be born.

Sleep, wood pigeon, sleep, for now  
The little golden fire-flies come  
Out of the whispering bamboo-groves  
To light the troops of fairies home.

Sleep, my heart, and rest thee well,  
The Dream Junk sails the silver sea,  
Hasten to reach the Port of Sleep  
Where wait her precious freights for thee.

## Dreamland.

How many *li* to dreamland?

Every baby knows.

The road leads straight through mother's  
arms,

You follow it safe from all alarms,

She holds you warm and close.

What does one see in dreamland?

Every baby knows.

The things she promised as you crept

On to her lap before you slept—

All the delights you chose.

What does one do in dreamland?

Laugh and sing and play;

Never a soul says "don't" to you,

There isn't a thing you must'nt do

The happy, livelong day.

## Chinese Cradle Song.

The little stars in the Bamboo Grove\*  
Are all set up so high,  
That little hands can never reach  
To pull them from the sky.  
But you shall ride on a magpie's wing,  
And travel up to see  
If they are really precious gems  
Worth bringing back to me.

\*) The Bamboo Grove is the Chinese name for the  
Milky Way.







## Bamboos.

The bamboos bend their feathery heads  
Above the velvet moss,  
Their pointed leaves are never still,  
The breezes sway them at their will,  
They shiver and quiver and toss.  
The bamboos seem like restless men  
Lacking in dignity,  
They fidget with their small affairs,  
They fuss and fume at petty cares,  
And flurry and worry and flee.

## Peonies.

Like painted ladies at the play  
The peonies come out to-day,  
Sitting so regal in their box  
Of carven rocks.

Their petals wave like scented fans,  
Their buds, like rosy-tinted hands,  
Shine with pale jewels, bright and new,  
Of morning dew.

Their gorgeous robes are all unpinned,  
And blow out lightly in the wind,  
They curtsy gracefully and sway  
Like painted ladies at the play,  
The peonies to-day.





## Pigeons.

Pigeons, wheeling in circles,  
Flying high,  
Sail with a wing to the sun,  
And a wing that is touched by the shadow.....

Men, following Desire,  
Climbing high,  
Mount with a face to the light,  
And a heart touched by dark disillusion.....

Pigeons,  
Seeking whence the winds come from,  
Follow them unresisting....

Men,  
Finding where the winds blow to,  
Buffet them, still insisting....

## The Old Philosopher.

(Adapted from the Chinese).

I am like an old tea-pot,  
Cracked and discoloured  
From standing year after year on the shelf  
of life.

Some day I shall slip from the hand of  
Time, the Potter,  
And break, like all vessels of mortal clay,  
And friends will gather up the fragments...

Perhaps a little sorry  
That the ugly old thing which nobody  
wanted  
Is gone at last.

But I wonder  
How many of the neighbours  
Will spend five coppers for mourning  
clothes  
To wear at my funeral?



## A Spider's Web.

A spider's web of dainty opal gauze,  
Glittering with dew,  
Is just a spider's web and nothing more  
To me or you.

But to knight errants, like the blue winged  
fly,

Adventuring free,  
It is a fairy palace that allures,  
Most temptingly.

## Evening in a Peach Orchard.

Through a soft haze of blushing trees  
Whispers the breeze,  
And murmuring, like a shallow stream,  
Soothes to a dream.

In the flushed heavens the moon hangs  
high,

And petals fly  
To sink where, in the meadow grass,  
Deep shadows pass.

The Golden Orioles, settling slow,  
Call sweet and low,  
The toilers from the fields are come  
A-weary home.

The blossoms breathe an incense cloud,  
Their heads are bowed,  
As Night's soft blessing, full and deep,  
Lulls them to sleep.

Songs of the People.





## Song of the Coffin Maker.

When you choose a winter coat,  
When you pick a wife,  
Waste no time about it  
For they only last your life.

But when you buy a coffin  
You need it strong and good,  
So get the richest lacquer  
And take the finest wood.

Spare no time in choosing,  
And never heed the price,  
Buy the best for your long rest,  
You will not buy it twice.

## Wanderer's Song.

The golden Sun is my lover,  
The silver Moon is my friend,  
The clouds are my boon companions  
From dawn until daylight's end.  
I would rather follow the eagle  
Or the wild geese, flying free,  
I would rather chum with the mountains,  
Or hark to the roar of the sea,  
Than listen to all the gossip  
Man's cruel tongue recalls,  
And smother the soul within me  
In cities with prisoning walls.

## The Chant of the Threshing Floor.

Flail in hand on the threshing floor  
We beat the golden grain;  
*Kaoliang* red and *kaoliang* black,  
Millet like golden rain,  
                    Thwack, thwack,  
We beat till our wrists are sore.

Powdered dust from the threshing floor  
In eyes that sting and pain,  
Weary arm and aching back,  
While the flails sing the old refrain,  
                    Thwack, thwack,  
And sweat streams from every pore.

Hard the toil of the threshing floor,  
Yet why should we complain?  
Plenteous food will never lack  
Till the harvest comes again,  
                    Thwack, thwack,  
What can a man ask more?

## A Pilgrim's Song.

O, little shining rivulet  
Born in the rock-bound spring,  
I bring you all my weariness—  
A gift of wandering.

Thy fern-fringed lips rest tired feet,  
Thy waters soothe my pain,  
But must I follow thee, cool and sweet,  
Down to the dusty plain?

## Song of the Goatherd.

Men talk of liberty,  
But I am free;  
Desire riches,  
I have countless wealth;  
Struggle for power and place,  
But I have space.

Before me the mountains,  
Beside me the streams,  
Sweet grass for my goats,  
And the world for my dreams.

I always go wandering, wandering free,  
None have oppressed or down-trodden me,  
Why then all this talk about liberty?









## Little Gold Fish.

Little gold fish, I envy you,  
Happily swimming your long life through,  
Gleaming and darting, quick and cool,  
In your shadowy lotus pool.

Little gold fish, you never wear  
A binding cap, to keep your hair  
From getting wet, or a bathing suit;  
You never hurt a dainty foot  
Among the rocks, where free you play  
At hide and seek the livelong day.

Little gold fish, I envy you,  
No shower of rain can wet you through.  
Naked, you little, happy thing,  
Warm in winter and cool in spring!

## Little Red Fire.

Little red fire, burn slow, burn slow,  
You frighten me when you shoot up so,  
Making one mouthful of *kaoliang* stalks  
I gathered for you on my weary walks.

Little red fire, glow red, glow red,  
To warm the *k'ang* for my winter bed.  
Please eat as little as ever you can—  
Fuel is so dear for a poor old man.

Little red fire, I beg your grace,  
Stay in your own little cozy place.  
Why dance to the roof like a scampering  
mouse?  
Just heat the oven—and spare the house.

## The Crops are Good.

The crops are good this year, thank God,  
The *kaoliang* washes like a flood,  
Wave after wave with golden spray,  
Breaking across the fertile plain,  
Up to the hills and back again.

The swallows dip into the tide,  
The bees, like hardy seamen, ride  
Boldly upon the rippling waves,  
Or steer their careful course between  
The slender masts of swelling green.

Make haste, make haste! shipwreck is near.  
Another month and, tall and drear,  
Gaunt skeletons of broken masts  
Will bend beneath the autumn gales,  
And gone will be the last leaf-sails.



## The Peasant's Prayer.

Lord of the Heavens, I do not pray  
A place too near thy glittering Throne,  
Nor shining robes nor jewels, nay,  
Nor any task too high for every day.

I am a simple peasant, grant to me  
Good health and strength to till my fruitful  
fields;

Send me soft rains for their fertility,  
And let me work in partnership with Thee.

Give me when once the toilsome day is  
done

A well-earned rest beside my cottage door,  
And there, when dark and daylight merge  
in one,

To hold within my arms my precious son.

Grant me when this life ends, grant me I  
pray,

In my next birth the things I have to-day,  
Without them Heaven would not be Heaven  
to me,

I am not fit for sainted extasy.



Temple Sketches.





# White Pines in a Temple Garden.

(Pai Chia T'an.)

White pines in a temple garden  
Like ghostly giants stand,  
Their heads held high in the moonlight,  
Their feet struck deep in sand.

Wild winds in their top-most branches  
Like ghostly wolf-packs wail,  
As they follow from dark to dawning  
The lure of a phantom trail.

Ginko Trees at Ta Chüe Ssu.  
-November-

Loveliest of trees, the Ginko now  
Is hung with gold on every bough,  
Since every fern-like leaf that lingers  
Is touched by autumn's Midas fingers.

Richest of trees, the Ginko sheds  
Its lavish fortune on our heads,  
And, like some spendthrift millionaire,  
Invites us all its wealth to share.

Pa Ta Chu.

Picturesque temples slipping down the hills,  
A foreign-style hotel, brand-new,  
The flare  
Of hissing lamps, the blare  
Of motor horns,  
Heralding tourists come to see the view.

Walk in, walk in, and gaze  
On shrines of other days,  
Now a pathetic show  
For those who come and go  
Their curious ways.

Brocaded curtains hiding dusty gods,  
Push them aside. These cobweb screens  
Worn thin  
By passing time, begin  
To fall apart,  
And droop on bended knees from rusty  
rods.

Walk in, walk in, my friend,  
Your offering will mend  
Torn roofs and broken walls,  
Or help re-gild the halls  
That crumble to their end.

Play the kind surgeon for an hour's space,  
One of the passing crowd, then haste  
To dine  
On copious food, with wine  
You lack at home—  
Compared to this sight-seeing is a waste.

## The Pool.

(At Hei Lung T'an.)

The limpid pool like a lute of jade,  
With mossy wrappings of old brocade,  
Lies drowsing in the chequered shade.  
Still world and windless sky,  
Shimmer of heat,  
Peace, like a lullaby,  
Spread at our feet.

Pi Yun Ssu.

Lift up, lift up your eyes unto the hills,  
Where Pi Yun Ssu, a clouded marble gem,  
Is set in the green valley's diadem!  
Breathe in the incense the wild thyme  
distills.

The shadows move, processional and slow,  
Across the plain, with fingers on their lips,  
To touch at last the noble tower's tips,  
When they have blotted out the world below.

Hark! to the bells that like a flock of doves  
Fly out upon the drowsy evening air,  
While in his fields a peasant kneels at  
prayer  
Beside the crumbling tombs of those he  
loves.



Hark, in the bells' soft voices falling,  
Faint and far, can you seem to hear:  
„Lord and Master” (the Faithful calling),  
And: *”You have forgotten. I am here”*.





The Sweeper of Shadows.



## On All Soul's Day.

The soul comes back to its vacant dwelling,  
The old, old home that it knew on earth,  
To stand once more by the glowing hearth,  
With a ghostly love for the past compelling.

The feast is spread and the candles burning,  
The altar is fair with fruits and flowers,  
And one beside it is counting the hours,  
Her soft eyes filled with tenderest yearning.

Drawn by their force from a higher birth  
By a strength of love even death repelling,  
The soul comes back to its vacant dwelling  
To seek the Beloved One still on earth.

## The Emperor who Became a Monk.

(The Emperor Chien Wen, who fled in 1402 from Nanking before the conquering troops of his uncle Yung Loh to become a monk, lamented bitterly when an accident revealed his identity and he was obliged to leave his peaceful retreat).

O, call me not back to the throne again,  
Robe me no more in the robes that press,  
For peace is here on this cloud-topped hill,  
And light indeed weighs the poor monk's  
dress.

Few are the pilgrims that attain  
This deep retreat with its pious rest,  
Life slips away like a running stream,  
And I am only Time's passing guest.

The sound of the bells in the evening rain  
Is sweeter than any wine-stained fête,  
Wake me at dawn for the hour of prayer,  
But never again for affairs of state.

## Re - Birth.

Was I once a crag on some high peak's  
crest,  
With my grey head bared to the pitiless  
sun,  
Or my sharp comb serving for low clouds  
rest?

Was I once the cone-heavy branch of a  
pine,  
Tossing sharp needles in turbulent storm,  
Or scenting the air like a fragrant wine?

Was I once a glistening spider's thread,  
Hung among grasses a-gleam with dew,  
Or a painted lily with bended head?

No memory of past re-birth remains,  
But I give and deliver myself to Life  
To live my To-morrows as Law ordains.

## Remembrance.

(At the Jade Fountain.)

Long ago and long ago,  
You and I were here I know,  
For these pleasure parks of kings  
Seem to me remembered things.

This pagoda towering high  
Like a flame into the sky,  
Burning upwards towards the blue,  
I have seen it—so have you.

All the ripples on the lake  
Which the passing breezes wake,  
All these silent patient trees  
With the violets round their knees,  
Stir up ghostly memories.

Silver moon barque, sailing slow,  
Pines bent neath a weight of snow,  
Often we have seen them so  
Long ago and long ago.

Inscriptions:





Lines Carved on a Rock Overhanging  
a River.

The fields of Life are fair and wide,  
The River of Hope runs close beside,  
A-gleam in the morning light.  
O, Traveller hasten and drink thy fill,  
Lest further it run not beside thee still—  
Beware of the thirsty night!

Lines Written on the Wall of a Pleasure  
Pavilion

Once we plucked Roses of Passion,  
And, in youth's light-hearted fashion,  
Laughed at their thorns and their stains.  
Now their red petals are falling,  
Idly their beauty recalling,  
Ah! but their fragrance remains.









## Contrast.

Things cast no shade  
That stand not in the sun,  
Man holds no friend  
Who never made a foe,  
Life gives no joy  
Without its depths of woe,  
We earn no rest save by our work--well  
done.





## The Open Altar of Heaven:

There was wisdom in the Ancients  
When they built this open altar.  
Living worship, adoration,  
Should be free to rise on high,  
Unimpeded by a ceiling  
That is lower than the sky.

God should never be imprisoned  
In a temple of man's building.  
Who are we to dare ensnare Him  
In our crypts and vaults of stone?  
Wise were those who set his Altar  
In the sunshine all His own.

There was wisdom in the Ancients  
When they kept the priests from coming  
With their perfunctory praises  
To the shining marble Throne,  
When they sent one man to serve Him  
The God-Emperor—alone.



## Nirvana.

One little unforgotten, mortal day,  
I shall slip off my body like a garment,  
And soar away, quite light and free,  
To enter Thee, O Everlasting Peace!  
And thy deep Night, splashed by a thous-  
and Suns,  
Will drown my small desire  
For earth and home and Self.

## The Street Musician.

He played upon the *Hu-ch'in* and, at first,  
it seemed  
As if the music mocked at us and gleamed  
Like ripples on a lake, or flashed like  
birds,  
Rose-breasted, dipping down in airy flight  
To rise and soar again into the light.

He played upon the *Hu-ch'in* and, again,  
it seemed  
As if we grasped the visions that we  
dreamed.  
His cunning bow cast riches at our feet,  
Poured in our laps treasures we could not  
buy,  
Rich silks, rare flowers and jewels, lavishly.

A true magician  
This street musician,  
Gathering the joys that we each hoped  
to win,  
And giving them out through his small  
violin.



Are you really mortal,  
Children of an hour?  
Or are you, as the peasants say, just the  
souls who come to stray  
A moment in our bower.

## A Lover's Seasons.

The breeze upon a summer's day,  
How soft its fingers touch the trees!  
The fragrant peonies a-swoon,  
Drunk with the breath of radiant noon,  
The golden summit of the year  
And thou beside me, lady dear,  
To lead me down the perfumed ways,  
Can there be sweeter things than these?

The wind upon a winter's day  
That groans and shivers, ill at ease!  
The leafless shrubs with meek, bowed heads,  
Packed tight within their frozen beds,  
The dying year, stark and severe,  
And thou far distant, lady dear,  
Leaving me to my lonely way,  
Can there be sadder things than these?





Impressions:



## Peking—from the Western Hills

Far in the distance  
The city lies mysterious,  
Like an enchanted garden of stone flowers,  
Strange, exotic blooms.  
The White Dagoba, mirrored in the lakes,  
Is a twin magnolia bud  
That floats on the blue waters,  
And in the bluer air.  
Pink walls blush like lotuses  
Touched by their Lord, the Sun.  
Palaces are glowing tiger lillies,  
And faded towers drop their tiles  
Like tired petals.  
O, it is thirsty for tending, this garden!

Tall pagodas shoot up like reeds  
Ready, it seems, to bow before the wind;  
Small shrines, like modest buttercups,  
Dot level lawns of gray-green roofs,  
And higher up, far higher, reaching smooth  
hands

Towards the sky,  
The Temple of the Happy Year  
Rises like an a big Bluebell.  
O, what a pity, is it not,  
That factory chimneys will creep in  
Like ugly weeds—to over-run the garden?



## The Great Wall.

Writhing and twisting,  
Turning and doubling,  
Climbing a peak  
To leap into a valley,  
Crouching in a valley  
To spring upon a crag—  
The Great Wall—a huge stone monster,  
A dragon, petrified yet seemingly alive,  
Born from the brain of Ch'in, the Only  
First,  
In that dark age of time  
When monstrous creatures were a common  
sight;  
Its silver loops shine on the mountain tops,  
Finding a foothold where the Argali slips;  
Its towers stand like sentinels on naked  
rocks.  
The eagle lights upon their shoulders  
Resting without fear since, being stone,  
they move not.  
Immovable the Great Wall stands and  
lets the years



## The Birthday of Confucius.

The musicians are gathered together  
To make harmony before him,  
The Master of Ten Thousand Ages.  
They play upon the serpent-bellied *San-hsien*,  
And strike the sonorous stone *Tê-ch'ing*,  
They draw reluctant notes from the shriek-  
ing *Ya-hsien*,  
And strange sounds, like the hissing of  
silver snakes,  
From clay flutes, while the drums purr  
like angry tigers.  
High mount the immemorial hymns,  
Streaming towards the heavens.  
They are sent up in praise,  
Sped on their way with ceremony,  
Escorted by melodious words  
And deep obeisance, like honoured guests,  
Because in life he loved them and listened  
to them with pleasure.  
Let them soothe his spirit, let them invite  
his spirit  
Like an ear to lean over us, and hear the  
tale of our misfortunes,





## The Story-Teller

He stands in a corner of the busy fair,  
The crowd pressed close around him stares  
and gapes—

A dull, blue-coated crowd of toilers  
Freed from the work-bench for the festival.  
His eyes, a moment, rest on those that look  
Towards him somberly.

Then, suddenly,

He opens wide a door and leads them in  
To a new world of fair romance.

He lights their lives, a heavy daily round,  
With high adventure, shows them rebel  
troops

Storming the high walls of the capital,  
Leads them to sack the city.

See how the smoke spreads like black  
plumes across the sky,

Hark to the bitter lamentations

Of women and old men who curse and die.

Alone, with artful gestures and consum-  
mate skill,

He shows them war,

With all its horrors and its glorious deeds;





## The Blind Singer.

In an open tea-house  
Overlooking the Canal,  
Amid the shouts of the bargemen  
And the bustle of passengers coming and  
going,

A blind singer is singing  
An old, old song.

His figure is bent like the branch of a  
gnarled pine tree;

His face is ugly and pitted by small-pox;  
But from his disfigured lips

There ripples a miracle of a voice,  
Young and deep, unutterably touching.

He sings as the simple peasants sing,  
With vocal rhythms learned from cicadae  
And morning larks.

He weaves an air so golden thin  
That its fragile tones break

Into fractions and semi-fractions  
Of the tones we know.

All the sorrow and the sweetness and the  
patience

Of life by the Canal flows into his voice—

The blind singer is singing.

Alas! that the people are busy unloading  
their boats

And the moon is busy with her reflection  
in the stagnant water

Which is unfit to mirror her.

But the stars smile their inscrutable twinkling  
smile.

They smile on the singer and seem to  
whisper:

“Neither have the people, so busy about  
their affairs,

Neither have they time to listen to our  
harmonies.”

## Incense.

(There exists in China a very rare and costly incense known as "Spirit-Recalling Incense" which has the power to summon the ghost of a dead person).

I lighted a stick of the magical incense  
that summons the souls of the absent.

It is more precious than pearls and more  
valuable than yellow jade.

I lighted it for Her, to bring my Beloved  
back to me,

On the anniversary of our parting,  
Because to-night my spirit ached with  
intolerable loneliness.

She came—creeping towards me in the  
perfumed smoke,

Swaying and bending in trailing robes,  
exactly as in life,

With graceful gestures like young bamboos  
in the wind.

A smile lay on the open lily of her face  
Her arms were stretched out towards me,  
Death could not hold her back.

Just for one moment, Time seemed to stand  
still for us  
While he marched on with the rest of the  
world.

Just for one moment, I imagined that her  
spirit re-incarnate  
Would step forth between the dragon  
handles of the brazier,  
And, crossing the shadowy boundary, come  
again to me.

Vain illusion!

The thrill of meeting is not meant to linger.  
She fades away. . . . .

The precious incense that could tempt her  
back burns low.

Well, for a moment I have brushed the  
world aside and walked among the stars  
with her.

The price I paid? What does that matter?  
It is not greater than the price of my own  
life,

A useless thing—without Her.

All I had has gone to buy this pleasure  
of a moment,



Leaving the rice bowl empty.  
Better so. Now let my body waste away  
And may my spirit, like a breath of smoke,  
Go free to join her in the dreamless night.

## Beggars.

Many are hungry,  
Nothing I can give will feed them all.  
Alas, that some must die for lack of food,  
That others stronger, fitter may live out  
their lives.

Now when I hear the starving, snivelling  
wretches.

Following my cart and crying plaintively:  
"Give, give, good sir, give, pitying elder  
brother!

Give just one single, large, round, copper  
piece!"

I wish that I could over-turn the sky  
And use it as a massy hollow bowl  
And load it to the brim with steaming rice,  
Then cry aloud to all: "Eat, eat your fill!"  
But since this gift is far beyond my power  
Here, take my paltry coppers!



The winds will beat you clean, will beat  
you cold  
And then the sun will come and paint you  
gold,  
Arm you with valiant light,  
Till we can scarce believe you are so tired—  
and old.

The Statue.



## The Statue.

In olden times there lived an Emperor who came to his beautiful Favourite and said: "Behold, I love thee as no mortal man has ever before loved a woman. Never has there been such true love as mine for thee in all this changeful world".

And the Court Beauty believed him—because such was her nature.

But not content with his protestations, the King said further: "Behold, I give thee as a token this figure of pure and precious gold to be a symbol of my love—a figure of gold clothed in fine garments. Set it up in thy house for thy pleasure."

And she did as she was told, and all the other women in the Palace wondered and said: "How great must be the love of our Lord if he offers to the object of his devotion such a priceless gift!"

Now the King was proud of the pleasure of his Beloved. But one day, her first awe and wonder being gone, the Favourite touched with her hands the figure

and the wonderful garments to see of what manner of stuff her happiness was made—and she found the figure was gold indeed but the feet, which were hid by the trailing robes, were clay.

Then her eyes were opened and she craved audience with her Lord and said to him: “Why, O King, didst thou not tell me that the feet of thy love were of clay—the clay which men call Selfishness? If thou had’st done so might we not have hidden them together?”

But he answered: “I have believed them gold—and this belief was necessary to support my love”. Then she answered him meekly: “O my Lord, I would so gladly have known them clay and, knowing, covered them!”



The Sweeper of Shadows:



## The Sweeper of Shadows.

In the grey-walled capital, the old order changeth. Aeroplanes disturb tame pigeons sunning themselves on palace roofs. Passing motors drown the song of cicadae in sheltered gardens. Modern pavement is laid in the "Lane of a Thousand Fragrances" and the palace of the Great Lord Ku is filled with Republican clerks in fur-lined frock-coats, while sentries with fixed bayonets stand at its doors.

Ten years ago the dignity of the beautiful main gateway was guarded only by old Chang-ti, a picturesque figure, dry as a stik, wrinkled as crackled porcelain, beloved by every creature in that quiet, dusty street—men, women, naked babies, even the mangy dogs—for his kindly smile and gentle heart.

His father before him swept and garnished the courts of the house of Ku year in and year out—on long summer days when the air was drowsy with blossom-breathings and vibrant with the chirping of

innumerable crickets; likewise on winter days when the bitter lashes of the north wind stung and cut cruelly.

As soon as he was big enough to hold the broom, the boy began to learn the mysteries of his father's humble trade and when the old man entered upon the Way of Peace, he was able to carry on the work.

His was no light task, for the courts of the Great Lord were filled to overflowing with Flowering Peach Trees and Pomegranate bushes, with *Hsien Kuei*, the sacred Cassia, and *Ching Hsing Ts'ao*, the Star Flower, in green earthenware pots ornamented with dragons, with beautiful willow-trees also whose long branches are like women's unbound hair. The lightest breeze scattered leaves or petals on the white stones.

These Chang-ti always hastened to sweep away. But there were darker patches which obstinately resisted all his efforts. They troubled him exceedingly because they marred the shining whiteness of the pave-

ment and he was perpetually warring against them.

The other servants, who liked him for his amiable ways and were always kind to him, explained that these dark spots were shadows. But though they patiently repeated the word again and again, he never understood, could never understand for, by some strange caprice of fate, his mind had not grown as his body grew. His mind had been born into a perpetual childhood. . . . So thereafter he was allowed to persist in his harmless fancy and continue his sweeping undisturbed.

He was never really unhappy because he never realised the impossibility of the task he had set himself. He even had moments of pure happiness untroubled by desire which the other retainers of the household, with their perpetual bickerings and pinchings and screwings, secretly envied him. After a hard morning's work, for instance, when he had succeeded in sweeping

all the walks clean of shadows, a look of absolute contentment settled on his face.

Then he laid aside his bamboo broom and prepared to go off to the noon-day meal when some one called out the announcing phrase: "K'ai fan", "the rice is opened". Just before leaving he always took one last look over his shoulder to admire the spotless courtyards. Alas, while his back was turned new grimacing black shapes had gathered under the western wall. The smile would fade from his patient face then and, forgetting the steaming food that awaited him, he would go sorrowfully off once more trailing his broom behind him to disperse the intruders. It was hard to begin again just when he had nearly succeeded—so nearly.—It was doubly hard because everything seemed to conspire against him, even the clouds and the birds flying overhead and the big velvet-winged butterflies.

Yet he neither complained nor despaired. He only swept the harder. Sometimes

in the cool of the evening, when the lord of the household walked in the gardens, he would find the lad still toiling and, patting his cheek kindly, say: "Well, Small One, is thy work not done yet?" And the boy would always be obliged to answer shamefacedly: "Not yet, Master".

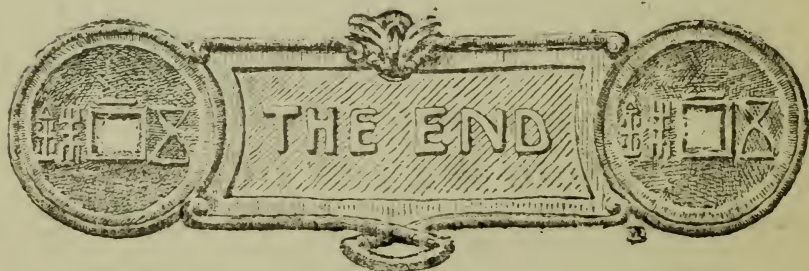
Thus he fought against the shadows year after year, the sun always before his broom and the moon behind it, till one winter the shadow of age touched Chang-ti himself as it had touched his father before him. His hands became too stiff for work. Another was given his place then in the garden and he was made keeper of the gate—an honorific charge allowing him to sit all day on a sunny bench with the other retainers who, having grown old in the service of the Great Lord Ku, were entitled to quiet idleness. But though they were too old to work any longer, these bowed and twisted servitors, they were still dreamers of dreams, still eager to discuss the things

that they desired. In each of them some longing was still alive.

“Ah,” said one, “if I only had what I fancy, a beautiful *yamen* with blue tiles for a roof and carved dragons wriggling and snarling in gold underneath!”

A second craved dainty foods—shark’s fins and soup made of the nests of birds, and a thousand other dainties which he had never tasted. And a third desired fur robes long and thick as the robes of the Master.

“And thou, old Chang-ti?” someone asked turning to him. The old man, called back from his reverie, sighed long and deeply. Then, after a pause, he said: “I—I wish only for strength to sweep my shadows as once I did”.









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